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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 000663

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E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: TURKISH MEDIA REACTION
THURSDAY, MAY 7, 2009

IN TODAY'S PAPERS

Village Guard System Under Scrutiny After Brutal Attack in Mardin
All papers: The Killing of 44 people at a wedding ceremony in Mardin's Bilge Village remains the top issue for today's media outlets. Eight people were arrested yesterday in connection with the attack. Papers report that 70 children were orphaned from the attack. Mainstream Sabah and all TV channels last night reported that the relatives of the suspects of the massacre, despite the security measures taken by the gendarmerie, were leaving their village for good. Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak quoted Interior Minister Besir Atalay as saying "the weapons used in the massacre were the weapons given by the state to the village guards." Liberal Radikal notes that the village guard system in the Southeast became the focus of attention in the aftermath of the massacre in Bilge village and the government plans to reform the system after discussions with regional officials, civilian organizations and security officials. Mainstream Sabah reports that the DTP has filed a proposal to initiate a parliamentary investigation into the village guard system.

Editorial Commentary on Mardin Bloodbath

Hadi Uluengin wrote in mainstream Hurriyet: "This unspeakable act, among other things, also demonstrates a fact that has been ignored - blood feuds and other archaic traditions are part of the Kurdish culture and this is something that needs to be addressed seriously."

Ahmet Selim wrote in Islamist oriented Zaman: "This deliberately planned massacre is a reflection of social trauma in the society - it's not mental illness, it's a thinking illness. And this psychology is not limited only to rural Turkey, but now there are fewer legal ways to punish such a crime. It was a mistake to abolish capital punishment."

Ismail Kucukkaya wrote in mainstream Aksam: "The feudal structure in the southeast has been kept or even encouraged by the state because it was easy for the system to control. Now is the very time to wake up about the dangers that might effect the whole society."

Fehmi Kuru wrote in Islamist oriented Yeni Safak: "With this massacre, the village guard system was caught red handed. This is something that should be dealt with immediately."

FM Davutoglu Goes to TRNC for His First Official Visit
Sabah, Zaman, Aksam, Hurriyet: Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu went to northern Cyprus yesterday and openly declared Turkey's support for northern Cyprus on all kinds of issues. Following his meeting with Turkish Cypriot Leader Mehmet Ali Talat, at Davutoglu told journalists, "Everyone should avoid any kind of step that would adversely affect the negotiation process. Including the international courts, all parties should support the constructive efforts of President Talat. What's important is to realize a final and fair solution in Cyprus and make it an island of peace and stability in the eastern Mediterranean."

Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Arinc Visits Lebanon
Mainstream Sabah and Islamist-oriented Zaman report that Deputy PM Bulent Arinc went to Lebanon yesterday as his first official visit. Minister Arinc met with Lebanese PM Siniora in Beirut and voiced support for Lebanon's national unity by saying "Turkey is a reliable friend of Lebanon and Turkey attaches big importance to national unity and domestic peace in Lebanon."

Ergenekon Case is Being Closely Followed by the EU
Mainstream Milliyet and Islamist-oriented Zaman report that during a session regarding Turkey's democratic process at the European Parliament, Commissioner Olli Rehn said Brussels closely follow the Ergenekon case, press freedom and the Kurdish issue. He said "The

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Ergenekon probe should be pursued to the end. It is questionable whether or not the rule of law principle was applied in the last waves of the probe or whether or not these were politically motivated." Rehn also expressed concern over the recent developments about the freedom of press in Turkey and they would touch upon this issue in the next progress report.

President Gul Holds a Meeting with MHP leader Devlet Bahceli
Mainstream Milliyet reports that President Gul held a meeting with MHP leader Bahceli at the Presidential Palace yesterday. Reportedly, Bahceli said "we are not against the normalization process with Armenia. However, this process should be pursued without damaging the ties with Azerbaijan. If Turkey opens the border with Armenia, this would be interpreted as an acceptance of the Armenian occupation in Azeri territory."

100 Civilians Killed in U.S. Operation in Afghanistan
Flashy headlines condemn the latest U.S. strike in Afghanistan during which as many as 100 civilians were killed. Mainstream Milliyet reports "There was a massacre of civilians in Afghanistan," when "American forces launched an air attack on the Western village of Ferah." In "The U.S. Bombs a Village," leftist nationalist Cumhuriyet notes, "100 people were killed in another massacre in Afghanistan." Liberal Radikal reports, "U.S. forces targeted two villages in clashes with the Taliban, but as many as 150 civilians may have been killed." Leftist Taraf reports "The U.S. Kills A Large Number of Civilians." Mainstream Sabah headlines, "Those Seeking Shelter in Their Homes Were Struck By U.S. Planes." Islamist oriented Yeni Safak criticizes the U.S. for "receiving President Karzai on Tuesday and launching an attack that killed 100 civilians in Afghanistan the next day," noting that "Karzai kissed Nancy Pelosi's hand the day before the operation." Mainstream Haberturk reports "The U.S. bombed civilians during an air operation in Afghanistan."

NATO Exercises Begin
Media outlets call the NATO exercises with Georgia 'controversial' due to Russia's objections. Islamist-oriented Zaman headlines, "NATO Begins Its Controversial Georgia Exercises," that are being conducted "despite Russia's strong objections." Liberal Radikal headlines, "NATO's Georgia Exercises Stretch Russia's Limits." Mainstream Milliyet exclaims in the mocking headline "A Threat to Russia!" that "Russia has called Georgia its biggest threat."

Clinton Meets with Azeri and Armenian Foreign Ministers
Leftist Taraf reports in "Hillary Clinton Joins the Case," that "U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton met separately with Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Memmedyarov and Armenian Foreign Minister Nalbandian." Mainstream Sabah reports "Nalbandian thanked the U.S. for supporting the normalization of ties with Turkey and for supporting a peaceful resolution to the Karabakh conflict," while, "Memmedyarov underscored Azerbaijan's strategic global value."

The Af-Pak Summit Concludes

In "While Pakistanis Are On the Streets, Their Leader Is in the U.S.," Islamist-oriented Zaman criticizes the Pakistani leader for being in the U.S. when Pakistani troops are fighting the Taliban and civilians are fleeing. Liberal Radikal reports "The Civilian Massacre Overshadows the AfPak Summit." Mainstream Sabah comments, "At the same time President Obama received Afghan President Karzai, U.S. soldiers launched an operation that killed 100 civilians." Meanwhile, CNN Turk reports "Obama Vows To Prevent Civilian Deaths."

Editorial Commentary on PKK-Ceasefire

Turker Alkan wrote in liberal-intellectual Radikal: "The recent statements by the PKK's Karayilan that appeared in Milliyet seem to be an attempt by the PKK revises its struggle into a peaceful

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platform. Karayilan's call should be taken seriously. Even though his suggestion for a general amnesty for all militants is not as easy as it may sound, there are some other steps to take. First of all, there should be accelerated steps toward cultural rights and democratization because these are fundamental citizen rights. And the current repentance law can be made more applicable."

TV News (CNN Turk)

Domestic

- Following the operations against PKK Camps in Northern Iraq, Iran and Syria also launch operations against the PKK and PJAK camps.
- The suit against the murderers of Turkish Armenian journalist Hrant Dink is merged with the suit against gendarmerie officials charged with neglect in the murder.
- Justice Ministry rejects allegations that Turkish officials were trying to hush up documents sent by Germany in connection with an investigation related to irregularities in Deniz Feneri charity.

World

- Greek and Greek-Cypriot officials criticize FM Davutoglu for his visit to TRNC.
- Israel strikes three Gaza smuggling tunnels following Hamas rocket attack in Southern Israel.
- The Israeli Parliament Knesset rejects a motion proposing that Israel officially recognize the Turkish massacre of Armenians during World War 1.
- The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) detects particles of highly enriched uranium at a nuclear research site in Egypt.

JEFFREY